

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Employees

From: Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent

Date: September 18, 2020

Subject: APS Reopening Plan for Phase 2

As we near the midway point of the first nine weeks of the 2020-2021 school year (Phase I), I wanted to take a moment to provide a brief update on our Phase II reopening plan, particularly as it relates to resuming in-person teaching and learning at our schools.

The APS Board of Education will host a special called Board meeting on September 23, 2020 at 5:00 pm. During this Board meeting, the Administration and the Board will update the community on our Phase II reopening plan. Wednesday's Board meeting can be viewed live or on-demand on the [Board's Facebook page](#).

Our final plan will be presented during the regularly scheduled board meeting on October 5, 2020 at 2:30pm, which you can watch live or on-demand on the [Board's Facebook page](#). In the meantime, we will be engaged with stakeholders through various meetings and surveys.

Potential Date for Some Students to Return

We continue to monitor the health status of the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, and DeKalb County. At this time, we plan to begin bringing certain students back for face-to-face instruction by Monday, October 26, which is the start of the second nine weeks of school. At this time, the model or the amount of time for in-person learning has not been determined. Students returning for face-to-face instruction will be required to wear face-coverings as outlined in Board Policy [JCDB, Student Dress Code](#).

Special Education and Early Learning Students Identified for Initial Phase of In-Person Learning

As part of a phased approach, we have identified students who would likely return first to in-person learning if COVID-19 numbers continue to trend down. Below are the students who would likely have the opportunity to return first during our next phase:

- **Special Education Low Incidence** which includes students attending regional, self-contained classes as follows:
 - Preschool Special Education
 - Autism (K-12)
 - Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (all grades)
 - Severe/Profound Disabilities (all grades), Deaf/Hard of Hearing (all grades)
 - GNETS (Georgia Network Educational Therapeutic Services – Oglethorpe Campus)

The district has been working on alternatives to best meet the needs of these students based on the recommendations of our Individualized Education Program teams. While we have implemented the virtual model, our special education teachers and staff have worked with parents to develop Virtual Learning Contingency Plans that outline the specific services and supports that will be provided for all students with disabilities regardless of program while the district is operating in the virtual instructional

model. The student's traditional Individualized Educational Program will resume when the student returns to face-to-face instruction.

- **Pre-K- Second Grade:** In acknowledgment of the importance of early learning and the essential foundations that need to be established, students in grades Pre-K, Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade are also being considered to transition to face-to-face instruction in the next phase of our reopening plans.

Virtual Learning Continues for Other Students

All other students will remain in virtual environments. In accordance with public health data and the feasibility of school operations, we will move to transition other students back into the face-to-face environment and eventually resume full school operations.

These details, including potential dates for students in grades 3-12 to return to face-to-face instruction, will be outlined in our Phase II reopening plan.

Please note: the district's charter and partner schools must implement in-person learning reopening plans that are approved by the district and that follow COVID-19 mitigation protocols which are the same or similar to the district's. **Therefore, once a district decision about the transition to Phase II is announced, families of students in charter and partner schools should expect soon thereafter to hear directly from their schools as their plans may differ.**

Parent Survey to Declare Intent to Return

We will be sending a second survey to parents and stakeholders on Monday, September 28th to request that parents declare their intention for having their student/s return for in-person learning. We ask that all parents complete this survey, even if your student is not a part of this initial phase to return to in-person learning. We will gradually move other students into an in-person learning over time and we need to have the data from all parents on their intent to return or remain in the virtual learning environment.

To answer your questions and gather more of your input, **we will host a parent town hall on September 24 at 6 p.m. on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaPublicSchools>.**

Employee Return to Work

As the district moves to bring students back for in-person learning, some staff will need to return to their work site as determined by the final in-person learning model. As we have always done, we commit to doing this in a way that prioritizes transparency and staff safety and well-being, as follows:

- We anticipate that central administration and district offices will return to work beginning Monday, October 12, 2020. Each district office work location and division will determine a staggered work schedule for their respective staff.
- Teachers for select groups of students and other school-based instructional and support staff may also be asked to return to work for in-person learning on or before Monday, October 19, 2020. Additional scheduling information is forthcoming.
- ***We will be sending a required employee questionnaire by email for employees to complete regarding their expected ability to return to their worksite. The employee questionnaire will be sent out to staff on or before Tuesday, September 22.*** We ask that all employees complete this questionnaire by Friday, September 25, 2020. The district needs this information to build work schedules at each of our district worksites and school locations.
- Employees who are unable to return to work for medical reasons or to care for a household member, will be able to complete the necessary paperwork to submit to Human Resources for an

alternative work arrangement, which may include telework or emergency family medical leave, depending on the job duties and reason for the request. More information will be shared regarding the process and deadlines in an upcoming employee memo.

- Also, to answer your questions and gather more of your input, we will host two staff town halls on September 24. **The district will host townhall for district offices staff at 12:00 p.m. on September 24 and a townhall for all staff at 4:00 p.m. on September 24 also on APS XChange at <https://aps.workplace.com/>.**

APS Operational Readiness for In-Person Learning

Our goal has always been to strive for a return to in-person instruction as soon as the public health data indicates that it is safe for us to return to our school buildings. From the start, we have been working on preparing our classrooms and buildings for in-person teaching and learning. Our Facilities Department has been diligent in preparing for an in-person return to learning including by:

- Cleaning and sanitizing our schools and buildings
- Adding hand sanitizing stations in common areas
- Installing wall-mounted sanitizer and paper towel stations in each core classroom
- Adding disinfectant towels in each classroom
- Increasing pre-occupancy and post-occupancy HVAC run times from two hours to three hours
- Initiating a weekly water flushing plan during building low occupancy periods
- Conducting high touch common area wipe downs for at least two cycles daily and monitoring hand soap and paper towel stocks throughout the day
- Conducting facility wipe downs during nightly cleaning
- Implementing restorative cleaning operations conducted post-COVID-19 exposure
- Taking water fountains offline and installing water bottle coolers
- Securing the appropriate PPE for staff and student return

Teachers and staff have been working in our buildings – while maintaining social distancing and adhering to proper health standards – so that classrooms will be ready for students.

Phase 2 Reopening Plan Development

Our Schools and Academics Team continues to develop the specifics of our Phase 2 reopening instructional plans for each grade band (elementary, middle school, and high school) by working collaboratively with school leaders, teachers, and other staff to develop hybrid and full face-to-face instructional plans.

Currently, we are revisiting our initial plans to address potential changes given our experiences from the first few weeks of school along with feedback from our building leaders, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders.

Nothing is more important than safeguarding the health, well-being, and safety of our APS students, families, and staff. All of our decision-making is, and will remain, grounded in the public health data and the associated guidance issued by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Georgia Department of Education. Our plans are designed with flexibility in mind so we are well-positioned to pivot our decisions if necessary due to changing public health guidance.

Health and Reopening Updates and Plans

I want to remind our students and families that we developed our Return + Learn plan after months of preparation that included surveying more than 18,000 stakeholders in our community. Not only did we prepare this plan in an open, transparent fashion, we immediately [posted it](#) and made it widely available in early July. We have been executing that plan since the start of school.

When we announced that we would be starting the year with a virtual instruction model for at least the first nine weeks, I also explained that the district would provide health data checkpoints every month to guide whether we would remain virtual or move into some form of a face-to-face instruction or a hybrid model. We presented our first checkpoint at the Atlanta Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, September 8. The full presentation is available at www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/64352.

As we continue to make decisions, we will continue to follow the model as specified in our Return+Learn plan. Again, I must state emphatically: We want our students in our schools. We know that there is nothing like in-person instruction with direct teaching and learning.

We continue to ask for your engagement and patience as we make decisions in alignment with ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff. We will be in our schools again at a safe time. Until then, be well.

Yours in Service,

Dr. Lisa Herring